

Editor's Corner: Some Thoughts on "Adaptive Peaks," "Dobzhansky's Dilemma"—and How to Think About Evolution

Niles Eldredge

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I am grateful to Dr. Joseph Fail of our Editorial Board for pointing out an omission in my quotation of a famous paragraph by Theodosius Dobzhansky, in which he extends the metaphor of adaptive peaks to explain the evolutionary history of the diversity of life. The omission falsely creates the impression that some taxa in fact occupy adaptive valleys—whereas Dobzhansky saw all taxa as occupying adaptive peaks and "ranges." The error occurs on p. 244 (second column). The correct version of the quotation—which comes from the third edition of Theodosius Dobzhansky's *Genetics and the Origin of Species*, Columbia University Press, New York, page 10—is as follows (with the missing words now in boldface):

The ecological niche occupied by the species 'lion' is relatively much closer to those occupied by tiger, puma, and leopard than to those occupied

by wolf, coyote and jackal. The feline adaptive peaks form a group different from the canine 'peaks.' But the feline, canine, ursine, musteline and certain other groups of peaks form together the adaptive 'range' of carnivores, which is separated by deep adaptive valleys **from the 'ranges'** of rodents, bats, ungulates primates and others....The hierarchic nature of the biological classification reflects the objectively ascertainable discontinuity of adaptive niches, in other words the discontinuity of ways and means by which organisms that inhabit the world derive their livelihood from the environment.

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N. Eldredge (✉)
Division of Paleontology,
The American Museum of Natural History,
New York, NY 10024, USA
e-mail: epunkeek@amnh.org